

# **Islamization of Knowledge: A Methodology**

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## Occasional Papers Series

The publication program of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) has already addressed important issues in the field of Islamic thought and the Islamization of knowledge. In this respect a number of books have already appeared in several languages under eight main series: *Islamization of Knowledge Series*; *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought Series*; *Islamization of Culture Series*; *Research Monographs Series*; *Lectures Series*; *Occasional Papers Series*; *Perspectives on Islamic Thought Series*; and *Studies in the Islamization of Knowledge*.

The *Occasional Papers Series* published by the Institute's London Office, covers a number of research papers, articles, and lectures from the Institute's world-wide program as well as from Muslim scholars willing to make contributions. These are presented individually in the form of booklets that can be easily read or referred to. It is hoped that the booklets will reach students, scholars, and specialists as well as major sections of the world's Muslims alike in order to generate a fruitful debate on the vital issue of Islamization, to create an awareness of the intellectual crisis in its various shapes and forms, and to encourage an active role in the proposed course of action and solution. This series is also translated into other languages.

The second paper in this series, was originally an Arabic lecture entitled "Qadhāyāh Manhajīyyah fī Islāmiyyat al Ma'rifah", delivered at the Summer School on Islamic Thought jointly organized by the IIIT London Office and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Oxford in Dhu al Hijja 1410/July 1990. It was published the same year under the title *Madkhal ila Islāmiyyat al Ma'rifah* by the Cairo office in its series *Studies in the Islamization of Knowledge (Rasā'il fī Islāmiyyat al Ma'rifah)*.

The booklet presents, as its Arabic title shows, Dr. Khalil's views on how the Islamization of knowledge should be approached. The author argues that Islamization should not start from scratch but that it has to pay due attention to Islam's rich intellectual legacy which, he points out, even Western scholars came to consider as authentic part of modern intellectual thought. It is hoped that this work will contribute to the debate on Islamization, an issue which current worldwide events, especially in the Muslim world, have proved beyond doubt to be as imperative as ever.

# Islamization of Knowledge: A Methodology

## Introduction

The Islamization of knowledge is a process that takes place on two basic levels: theoretical and practical. The theoretical level which may serve as an introduction to the second explains the dimensions, motives, aims and main stages of the process and identifies ways of implementing them in all the different areas of knowledge. It also demonstrates the general position of the Qur'an and the other Islamic teachings in relation to modern science, casts light on the legacy of Islamic knowledge within its historical context so that its essential Islamic elements can be identified, and endeavors to trace the factors that have led to the unfortunate discrepancy between the Islamic vision and intellectual activity in the context of this legacy. The power of the imperialist onslaught—in both its historical and its modern forms—has contributed significantly to magnifying the discrepancy referred to and creating a duality that governs the forces of intellectual activity in the Muslim world at the present time.

The theoretical level includes the follow-up and classification of data relevant to the contemporary Islamic situation so that the Islamization process can be defined and consolidated. It indicates the basic steps that have been taken—or need to be taken—to promote and support publication, authorship, seminars, lectures, conferences and specialized institutions (particularly universities, which are the cornerstones of the whole operation). This is also the level at which suggestions may be made about how the Islamization process can be most effectively implemented.

It may well be possible to summarize the subject-matter at the theoretical level in one or more volumes. However, the practical level contains a much larger quantity of material since it deals with every branch of human knowledge—humanities, pure and applied sciences—and aims to reshape all of them in accordance with the Islamic view of reality. A single thinker—or even group of thinkers—are not capable of performing such a wide-ranging and diverse task as this. A project of this kind requires a large number of specialists in every discipline.

The Islamization of history, literature or economics can only be carried out if such specialists apply their highly specialised expertise to it on a full-time basis. There is nothing odd or surprising about this assertion. A specialist in Asian history, for example, will not be properly qualified in 'Abbasi or Andalusian affairs; and a specialist in the literature of the early Islamic period will not be properly qualified in modern literature. Precisely the same applies to a specialist in organic chemistry who is not required to acquire detailed knowledge in—and thus is not qualified to deal with—inorganic chemistry. And so on . . .

When work is carried out in any field of knowledge it is primarily 'integrative' and can only be done properly if it involves large numbers of people who are not only highly specialised, but are also endowed with a genuine Islamic vision and a broad cultural background.

This paper purports to show the basic characteristics of the first level. It should be noted that this level must be fully covered and explored before we can proceed to the second one which is an exhausting and time-consuming process. This is essential because, as we have indicated, the first level represents the introduction that is needed to guide us through the extensive and complex activities of the second level.

An undertaking such as the Islamization of knowledge also requires a great deal of work on two other levels: the media and the educational levels.

A proper, methodical and effective use of the media will open up excellent opportunities to create an interest among the intellectuals, specialists, administrators and prominent thinkers and leaders by showing them how necessary and indeed vital a task of this nature is. Proper use is relevant to the world as a whole, not only the Islamic part of it, since its consequences will be of crucial importance to the course of human culture. The media will thus put one of the most important intellectual endeavors of this century before those sections of society that are concerned with culture.

What concerns us primarily here is that a project of this kind should provide university students with a methodology textbook that can be taught to them at certain levels, show them the great importance of Islamization, make them aware of its true dimensions and provide them with the roles that will enable them to pursue a practical application. In universities this kind of book will pave the way for the next

step, the greater and more crucial step of Islamizing all the branches of knowledge: the social, applied and pure sciences that are researched and studied at university level.

### **Term Definition**

The term 'Islamization of knowledge' means practising (i.e. discovering, compiling, piecing together, communicating and publishing) intellectual activity based on the Islamic concept of the universe, life and man. When placed in such a setting it becomes harmonious and logically consistent, so that all knowledge outside this framework is seen to be in conflict with the laws of nature and with reality. We observe this to be especially true when we realize that the term 'Islamization' covers everything within the realm of true belief in the existence of Allah (SWT).

We shall realize that 'Islamization' is a logically sound activity if we remember that acquiring knowledge is a process of 'adding to', or 'empowering of', the intellect. More precisely, we can describe it as man's intellectual ability to master the physical, biological, spiritual and human phenomena contained within the universe, the world and life.

It was Allah (SWT) Who created man and breathed into him of His spirit, Who granted him his intellectual, sensory and bodily powers. He created life and the universe, which He filled with phenomena, beings, creatures and things, and made for them laws which govern their lives. He gave them power and energy, subjected them all to man — His vicegerent on earth. He ordered the latter to study the phenomena, discover and propagate the laws and use the energy to better his life in this world so as to make his life compatible with his status as a human being, borne by the Divine Will, preferred above all other beings and granted dominance over all creatures.

Let us remember also that Allah (SWT) is the Master of the universe and its secrets, laws and vast energies: He it is Who splits the seed and the kernel, Who sends the wind as tidings heralding His mercy, Who bears the ship in the sea, Who makes the night to pass into the day, Who made the moon a light and made the sun a lamp. He it was Who put life into clay, the Everlasting One; not even a single atom here or there escapes Him. There is no leaf, wet dry, nor grain of mustard-seed in a rock or in the darkness of the earth not known to Him.



If we remember all this and remember the moment when Adam came to the world and was taught all the names so that he could fulfil his mission on earth, we shall realize that man's interaction with his surroundings—i.e. his general intellectual activity—must be developed within the proper framework of faith if it is to operate in harmony with the cosmic laws.

The two 'parties to the transaction'—man and the world—are both created by Allah, the Master of all things. It is therefore natural that the terms of this transaction should stem from belief in Allah (SWT). It is also natural that intellectual activity itself should incorporate this greater truth—i.e. that Islamization should carry this broad meaning whereby matters are put in their proper place in relation to the realm of the Divine, Divine laws and Divine codes.

This Islamization does not only deal with the context of the pure and applied sciences and their relation to existence and life; it also of necessity includes the humanities. In fact, the latter are even more vital because they are concerned with determining man's position in this world and regulating his life so that he can fulfil his mission on earth.

In this area there are sciences that deal with the human being as an individual (e.g. psychology), or as a community (sociology and history); others regulate his public institutions (administration), control his subsistence activities (economics), co-ordinate his public relationships (politics), protect his rights and regulate his obligations (laws), or trace and develop his aesthetic sense and ways of expressing himself (the arts and literature).

All these disciplines also need to be re-modelled in an Islamic context and adopt methodologies, procedures and terms from the fabric and content of the *Shari'ah*<sup>1</sup> as defined by the Qur'an and the Sunnah<sup>2</sup> and developed over the years as a result of the *fiqh*'s<sup>3</sup> response to the challenges and changes of time and place. Thus only will all aspects of human life and activity acquire an Islamic vision, Islamic direction, Islamic terminology and Islamic implementation. This should eliminate anything that might lead to a dualism between the Divine orientation with its absolute knowledge and the conflicting relativism of human efforts.

Islamization of knowledge is not merely a call for compatibility between knowledge and the practical demands of the *Shari'ah*. Much more than this, it means that all human intellectual activities

should operate simultaneously at two levels—the theoretical and the practical. From here they should, like the other sciences, be verified within the framework of religious beliefs and shaped accordingly.

### **The Basic Structural Components of Knowledge and How They Relate to Islamization**

It may seem at first that the sciences do not all have the same kind of relationship with Islamization; that is, that they vary in the extent to which they can be Islamized. It may be that some or all of the humanities are capable of being Islamized owing to their human orientation and the fact that they share a common goal—in so far as, like Islam, they see their mission as regulating life. However, the pure sciences and the applied sciences may not be susceptible to this approach; even though it may be possible to find a relationship between Islamization and some areas of the pure sciences, it may seem impossible to establish any connection with other areas.

We should realize that the pure sciences differ from each other in the nature of their relationships with the Islamization process. It may be easy to recognize that the natural sciences are closely connected to the process, since their basic conclusions are reached through a particular intellectual concept of creation, the world, life and existence. These are precisely the issues that concern Islam.

On the other hand, sciences such as civil engineering, algebra, trigonometry or mathematics in general, as well as other disciplines like statistics, chemistry and possibly geology, may not be related to the process. This is because their contexts and conclusions may not be directly linked to that perspective or intellectual concept.

Here we should consider the stylistic or procedural contexts in which these sciences should be propounded from the point of view of discovery, formulation and transmission. In doing so we shall note that some of the results may have the potential to influence the thought process with the possibility of placing these disciplines in their correct faith-oriented framework and enabling them to fit harmoniously into the system for Islamizing knowledge in general.

One can best judge the above facts and overcome any resultant confusion or misconception with regard to the pure sciences if one remembers that Islamization does not mean—for a start—making

rules about mathematical or chemical equations or interfering with laws of physics or biology, or amending the atomic theory.

Scientific activities such as the above are neutral, whether they take place within a materialist, secular or spiritual context. Basically, the Islamization of this kind of science and knowledge is concerned with the attitudes and practices that are related to these activities, their relationship with the general trend of scientific and cultural activity, and ethical framework within which their theoretical and practical results are applied.<sup>4</sup> Thus it will be clear that in absolute terms chemistry, physics, mathematics, geology, etc. can escape the scope of Islamization.

It is important at this point to recall that Muslim scientists of yore, irrespective of their field of activity, used to approach their research from within the Islamic framework. They would begin their writings with *in the name of Allah* and pray for His blessing and conclude by dedicating their work to Him. Let us remember how they would remind their readers time after time that their work, the results they achieved and the axioms they postulated were due to Allah's favor, were mere drops in the unfathomable expanse of His knowledge.

At the same time, it would be superfluous to observe that the presentation of scientific data is not determined by faith-related parameters alone. It might also be alleged that Islamization is generally limited to matters of style and procedure and does not touch on the essential points of the subject. It would be useful in this respect for us to remember that mathematics, natural sciences, geology etc. can be employed (and they have indeed been so employed) as 'counter-Islamization' weapons—that is, to attack the Islamic faith. This has occurred (and still occurs) in societies where atheistic and secularist movements are dominant. At the same time, these sciences can be used to reinforce the faith in different parts of the world. We can see this in the scientific conventions of our own Islamic civilization in the days of its splendor and creativity. Therefore, we must realize beyond any shadow of doubt that we are not merely dealing with stylistic or procedural issues; the point is for us to establish how to conduct theoretical scientific activity within the framework of the struggle between *imān*<sup>5</sup> and *kufr*—in other words, how to subject it to the demands of Islam's cosmic view.

Whatever may be said about the pure sciences can also be said about



the applied sciences—i.e. technology. Here too we are not merely concerned with the formal, procedural aspects of applied scientific activity, but with ways of implementing it and dealing with it. The issues, therefore, may be clearer and easier to define than those related to pure sciences.

For example, the television and the cinema are devices that can have highly significant effects on the area of *imān* and *kufr*. This is obvious because of their impact on our senses. Indeed, some of the obstacles on the Muslim world's path to development exist because it has transferred technology and programs from others without making the necessary conversions or adjustments to render them suitable for the Islamic context. The mere recognition on our part of a shortcoming of this kind means in fact that development can now move in a new direction and be used to serve the purpose of the Islamic world-view. A serious attempt can thus be made to guide technology so that it helps meet the requirements of Islamic life instead of acting as a destructive tool. Much has already been said about this issue, nevertheless still more remains to be said—though not in these pages because our aim here is merely to outline the basic requirements and conditions of Islamization.

We shall realize that the different branches and subjects of these sciences are all linked in one way or another with the Qur'an's flexible, comprehensive view, which is broad enough to accommodate all different aspects of science including aims, methodologies, facts and application. However, before we move on to this section we must recognize that the humanities (e.g. history, sociology, psychology, law, economics, politics, administration, literature, the arts, etc.) will be the first in line for Islamization. The reason why they should be given top priority is that they operate within value-bound intellectual and moral frameworks. Moreover, they have channelled the imperfections, inconsistencies, disorder and contradictions which invaded and almost smothered the Islamic content.

Let us consider the efforts of past generations of scholars and researchers in these disciplines—usually backed by the authorities and countless institutions and corporations, sometimes even great states. We should then be able to picture the enormous volume of Islamic efforts needed to provide a correct perspective of the different areas of human knowledge. Misconceptions, distortions and deviations cannot be put right by mere individuals or specialists in particular areas; their ramifications are so extensive and their roots in the system

of false ideas so deep that a combined effort is called for, involving institutions and a high degree of co-ordination and scientific and material backing. This means that we must improve our ability to overcome geographical obstacles and to integrate all efforts; we must do our best to devote our energies and specialist Islamic knowledge towards achieving our objective.

During the early eighties two important institutions were set up. The first is the International Institute of Islamic Thought, which—assisted by its overseas offices and representatives—is making the most strenuous effort to solve the problem. The second is the Islamic Literary League, which has a positive influence on the general cultural and educational activity. The establishment of these organizations is welcome news for all those who look forward to the day when human knowledge will be guided once again by the *Shari'ah*, and when—after its long absence—science resumes its place within the framework of *iman*.

### **The Legacy of Islamic Knowledge**

One of our most urgent current priorities—from the point of view of thought and methodology—is to examine carefully the link between our intellectual legacy (in all its branches) and the Islamic view. This is a very essential and important contemporary intellectual and methodical activity. It is also essential to follow up the attempts at creating a discrepancy between the Islamic view and intellectual activity, as well as the level of the resultant negative effects and their sources. Following this we must scrutinize and select material so that today's Muslims can gain access to all the relevant Islamic terms and details that were produced and used by their ancestors, and were based on the Islamic concept of life.

If we are dealing with the Islamization of knowledge, does not this process make it inevitable to follow and implement the above three steps within the context of the Islamic intellectual legacy so that we can enrich the Islamization process with the sound elements and values that legacy contains?

These three steps call for a powerful concentration of specialised expertise with the highest degree of accuracy, commitment and knowledge. Moreover, a period of time is needed—years or possibly even decades. Most important of all, an attempt like this is bound

to require a considerable amount of hard work. For the Islamization program cannot start from scratch, discarding the rich fund of data and experience left behind by our ancestors in every field of knowledge. Some of this information was so fundamentally important that even Westerners came to regard it as an authentic part of modern civilization's cultural and scientific fabric.

Let us also remember that where this legacy is concerned some aspects of the humanities are by all criteria even superior to their equivalents in other nations—even within the context of modern civilization. These disciplines have broken new ground, made new discoveries, and are more in harmony with man's concerns, needs and nature. This being the case, we must realize that this legacy cannot be discarded, since the result would be detrimental not only to the Muslims but to human knowledge as a whole.

As a general principle it should be clear to us that we must avoid accepting one of the two following generalizations:

- (a) The entire Islamic legacy expresses the Islamic concept of the universe, the world, life and man.
- (b) The Islamic legacy does not necessarily represent an extension of this concept.

This legacy is a fabric of interwoven threads; some of which are original and basic, while others are alien and inessential. Some were formed by certain teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah or were developed within their framework, while others found their own way into Islamic civilization because people were impressed with some aspect or other of a non-Islamic culture. Others were deliberately inserted as alien bodies into the fabric of Islamic civilization by non-Islamic elements, for destructive and subversive purposes.

Whatever the case, anyone who attempts to carry out research into the Islamic legacy will have a very difficult task ahead of him unless he first identifies what is truly Islamic and distinguishes it from alien elements of Greek, Persian, Indian, Jewish or Christian origin. In fact, in any field of knowledge, areas may be found to contain both an Islamic and an alien element, not necessarily in specific details but in broad outlines and basic perspectives.

A duality such as this will produce two trends. In the first it will create two conflicting forms of knowledge based on premises that differ fundamentally from each other, while in the second a single

concept or idea will consist of a blend of the two conflicting forms. In consequence, it may be clear in Islamic philosophical terms (derived from and clearly influenced by Greek philosophy, and by the adoption of many of the latter's methodologies and themes); however, it may be considerably less clear in other scientific or human contexts.

In addition to the above, attempts to study, test and trace the connection of the elements alien to the Islamic vision—or the absence of it—call for a high degree of familiarity with the principles and basic concepts of the Islamic world-view. Furthermore, an understanding of one or more of the disciplines is required. This means that there must be Muslim cadres or working groups covering all disciplines, who possess specialist as well as Islamic knowledge. This is because it is not possible for a philosophy specialist—for example—to function as a historian or practise *fiqh* and legislation. Similarly, experts in the latter two fields will not be able to produce convincing conclusions in linguistics, literature or the arts. And so on.

On the other hand, what is required is that all the above individuals must be able to work together at the basic level—they are bound that is, to have common basic (conceptual as well as *shar'ī*) knowledge in relation to which the terminology of the area they deal with can be tested, examined and evaluated. However, after this initial stage they will each go their own separate ways, since the methodologies, orientations, material, conclusions, nature, etc. of each of their disciplines will differ from those of all the other disciplines.

There is another essential point that we must also take into account. We need to devise a set of criteria for dealing with the mass of knowledge in our legacy. These could give our project a systematic methodological dimension and enable those involved in it to make the best use of their time, resources and efforts in their endeavors to reach their objectives.

People are aware of the fact that not all the material from the legacy has the same scientific value or the same ability to influence present or future intellectual structure, since it does not all have the same ageless relevance to time and place. They are also aware of the fact that Muslims have a scale of priorities according to which some aspects of the legacy are absolutely essential, while others may be freely accepted, rejected or at least ignored.

If we take this into consideration we shall save ourselves a lot of extra effort. For a start, we shall be able to avoid the erroneous view of



the 'sanctity' of our legacy. Consequently, we shall be able to examine it objectively and distinguish between the original elements with true Islamic roots and those alien ones that were added at a later date.

The system of priorities and set of criteria will also help by saving a lot of unnecessary effort in dealing with legacy material which, apart from being of static historical interest, has no bearing on our present-day situation whether this concerns humanity at large or Muslim communities. Typical examples in sociology are Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* as well as other works that were inspired by it; they are essential tools for research into this branch of knowledge—not only for Muslims but in a world-wide context. The *Muqaddimah* was a pioneering work in this important field of knowledge and its body of terms still influence much sociological methodology today.

With regard to history, human knowledge in general cannot obtain a proper overview of history unless it gives proper attention to a historian like al Ṭabari, for example, and of the broad area covered by Islamic history including facts, analysis, study and compilation. The same applies to our contemporary Muslim world.

What we have said about sociology and history is equally applicable to education, geography, literature, the arts, etc. Hence if disciplines like these are of vital importance at a general level, then the Muslims themselves must be in even greater need of other areas such as the legal, *fiqh* and *Shari'ah* legacies. If these are properly studied, examined and classified, the way will be paved for a revival of Islamic *ijtihād*. Reviving *ijtihād* should not then start from naught or be severely hampered by a time-gap. This should ensure a smooth continuity for this very important discipline.

Admittedly, researchers in these fields will find areas—sometimes wide areas—that no longer contribute anything to man's knowledge or legal systems. For example, some of Ibn Khaldun's conclusions about sociology were deficient or wrong; history contains masses of lies, subversive statements and prejudices; there are large numbers of alien material which have infiltrated the Qur'anic sciences; the *fiqh* analyses of problems and changes wrought by time in the fields of *fiqh* and legislation; likewise in the case of literature, where rough criticism is not based on a methodology but is determined by personal taste.

Nevertheless, none of this lessens the importance of these disciplines.



or negates their importance. All it means is that the researcher can discard the areas that do not make a positive contribution, and this may well relieve him of a considerable part of his investigative burden.

On the other hand, some types of knowledge can be discarded, or at least suspended, with no resulting loss to human knowledge or to the essentials of the faith or the legislative system. I hope I am not exaggerating if I include in this category the philosophies of Ibn Sina, Kindi, al Farabi, etc., dialectics, large areas of *'ilm al kalām* (scholastic theology) as well as several crude, deficient theories in the field of the pure and applied sciences.

In any case, if disciplines such as these are given only minimal priority, then researchers involved in investigating the legacy will save a considerable amount of extra work and will be able to list their other priorities in a satisfactory manner. This will give them more time to concentrate on testing, sifting and classifying the legacy—one of the most essential tasks for the Islamization of knowledge, since it involves tracing back and clarifying the Ummah's conceptual, civilizational and historical roots in order to be able to eliminate the risks of starting from scratch or operating in a vacuum.

Particularly during the past two decades, Islamic legacy has become an open area frequented by thinkers who lack adequate understanding of the principles and elements of the Islamic vision. In fact, in many cases they are at odds with and even hostile to these principles. Consequently, they often use this legacy to support conclusions they have reached by applying an imperfect methodology which does not explore the legacy in order to understand and select those of its elements that relate to one or other of its rich, interwoven areas of knowledge. Instead, they apply a crude, arbitrary methods of selection which ignore several of the basic elements and retains only those pieces of evidence that support one narrow conclusion or another.

Within the process of the Islamization of knowledge serious attention should be given to legacy. A precise, authentic methodology, applied in conjunction with a proper vision of reality, will form the basis for the analysis and testing of the material that comprises this legacy.

The results will fully justify the efforts and sacrifices that will have led to them. Though the fruits of this labor will be slow to ripen, they will have done so in their own native soil and will bring benefit

to the Islamization process and satisfaction to all those involved with the legacy investigation work—whether academically or from the point of view of the *'aqidah* (faith). They will put an end to all the wrong approaches, which have—whether for noble or nefarious ends—tried to use the legacy's ample material to support their scrappy ideas.

### **Modern and Contemporary Islamic Material**

Research and authorship have produced a vast quantity of modern and contemporary Islamic material. This includes a valuable fund of knowledge which has been dealt with—in varying degrees—from an Islamic view-point and methodology.

Fortunately, this material covers most of the branches of the science indicated before, thus achieving what we might call 'integrated treatment'. The result of this is that those concerned, now have access to a fair number of items and conclusions which can assist in the Islamization of knowledge. Nevertheless, we have some reservations about the fact that there is a lack of balance in the degree of attention given to the different disciplines. For example, we observe a fair amount of study and research in Islamic economics and history, over the last three decades. Similarly serious attempts have been made in the study and criticism of Islamic literature, particularly over the last decade. The same may be said of the sciences of the Qur'an, Hadith<sup>6</sup>, *fiqh*, etc. which are by nature Islamic in their methodologies and structures. On the other hand, there are other disciplines that are very poorly covered, such as psychology, sociology, political sciences and administration, as well as the philosophy of science and most branches of the pure and applied sciences.

In this context another point should be noted. Modern Islamic material may be seen as a sort of extension of the Islamic legacy of knowledge. However, it is smaller in volume than the original legacy because it has had a shorter period of time at its disposal while the intellectual legacy took ten centuries or more to develop and produce its material. Nevertheless, modern and contemporary material is closer to the Islamic concept, and closer to its methodological and objective needs, possibly because it has benefited from accumulated earlier experiences and has had to respond to the challenges of the secular ideologies of the East and West. In addition,

there is the greater conceptual awareness created by modern and contemporary Islamic movements, together with the benefits of modern research methodologies and the 'auxiliary disciplines' which lead to more discovery and maturity during the process of research and authorship in any discipline.

For example, if we found that significant areas of the Islamic intellectual legacy told us something of the essence, the terminology and the methodological requirements of the Islamic vision, then we should, when dealing with phenomena and truth, be able to gain a clearer understanding, a stronger commitment to the terminology and methodology as well as a more independent ideological view.

It is true that—through ignorance or misconception—such a large amount of material may contain many shortcomings and may contradict basic Islamic principles. It is also true that the material may sometimes be unconvincing, shallow and of poor quality produced by people who lacked the required understanding of methodology, were incapable of analytical or constructive thinking and failed to penetrate deeply enough into the specialised scientific aspects of their subjects. Such factors gave many people false pretensions to literary mastery; their writings were too woolly and amorphous to enhance the concept that had inspired them or to contribute to a demanding project such as the Islamization of knowledge.

Admittedly, negative elements like these—and others—affect a considerable part of the material. However, due to the general context and the worthy intentions underlying such material, the fact that it was produced by people who were determined to ensure that everything they did was faithful to Islam and presented the best of much of their work—not only from an Islamic point of view but also at a world-level—this material made an important impact and asserted its presence within as well as outside the Islamic world.

As we have said, it is essential to go back to Islam's intellectual legacy and draw from it—after eliminating the dross. It is also vital to take modern and contemporary Islamic material seriously, since it can provide the complex process of Islamization with valuable experience, thought and authorship. First, though, this material must be subjected to a thorough but dispassionate verification so that the authentic can be distinguished from the spurious. It must also be sorted into categories according to its scientific and scholarly orientation. Each category must then be scrutinized by Islamic experts

who are specialists in the relevant fields and who should give the final word on it.

Those involved in the mechanics of the Islamization of knowledge must not delude themselves that it is possible to start from scratch. People involved in Islamization can gain access to a rich fund of knowledge which can help them carry out their mission. In fact, they will come across some material that is almost 'ready-made' and can make its contribution to the methodology or subject-matter of Islamization without further changes or adaptation. This, of course, will save a considerable amount of time and effort.

Works by thinkers—such as Abūl Ḥassan al Nadwi in India, Muhammad Iqbal and Abūl A'la al Mawdūdī in Pakistan, Muṣṭafā al Sibā'ī in Syria, Nadīm al Jisr in Lebanon, Malek Bennabi in Algeria, Sayed and Muḥammad Qutub, Muhammad al Bāhī, Muḥammad al Ghazālī and Dr. Yūsuf al Qaraḏāwī in Egypt, Sa'īd al Nawrasi in Turkey, Taqī al Dīn al Nabhānī in Jordan, Muḥammad Asad (Leopold Weiss), originally from Austria, Roger Garaudy in France, and countless others in the Islamic world over the last century and a half<sup>7</sup> are ideal vehicles for presenting the appropriate subject-matter to build on provided the material is treated selectively in accordance with pre-established criteria so that the Islamization of knowledge process can be built on homogenous ground.

### **Organized Attempts**

A number of specific attempts have been made to introduce the Islamization of knowledge using various approaches.

An organized appeal for the Islamization of knowledge was probably first made in the seventies. This was followed by the establishment of the International Institute of Islamic Thought in 1981, which was entrusted with the task. Genuine attempts were also made at some universities to implement the Islamization project in some areas of specialization. During this period a flurry of media, academic and practical activities have taken place in the following areas: books and publications; conferences, seminars and lectures; institutions.

We do not intend in this paper to examine all the activities included in these areas. However, we shall look at one particular institution which is of central importance and form the main instrument for putting the plan into practice, namely the educational institution, from primary school to post-graduation level.



The educational establishment is the chief executive instrument of the contemporary education systems and forms the link between the subject-matter—the material of knowledge—and the needs of the times.

From the moment of childhood awareness the primary school takes hold of the child so that it can impart to him the bare essentials of knowledge and educate him in putting as much of this knowledge as possible into practice. As the pupil progresses through school the educational institution tries to increase the breadth and depth of his stock of knowledge. When the pupil has completed the secondary stage and moved on to take undergraduate studies, he will be well prepared to cope with specialised studies. Then comes the graduate studies stage, when his endeavors are crowned with very specific specialised study of a particular discipline.

At every stage the educational institution is the basic instrument for transmission and acquisition of knowledge. The vision, philosophy, world-view or methodology each institution follows determines the belief and convictions of its graduates.

Being the main channel for knowledge acquisition, the educational establishment dominates the most sensitive stages of the learning process—from below the age of six to (in some cases) over the ages of thirty or forty. Therefore its philosophy or world-view plays a very crucial role in determining the ideational, ideological and creedal orientations of the generations that obtain their education from it.

We can see, then, that the educational institution is extremely important to the process of Islamizing knowledge if it applies an Islamic methodology and concept in a proper manner. Unfortunately, over the last century and a half it has been able to block any serious attempts to establish harmony and compatibility between the different branches of knowledge and Islamic requirements. If an introductory primer like *Al Qirā'ah* (reading), in which first-year primary pupils learn how to form and pronounce the letters, does not contain the word 'Allah', then children will receive the first anti-Islamic indoctrination—from the very beginning of the learning-process—contrary to what they have probably learnt from their families or the wider community. This will undoubtedly lead to a split in the child's psychology that may be difficult to heal in the future.

On the other hand, the occurrences of the word 'Allah' in other school primers of this kind will strengthen children's belief and lead



them towards greater complementarity between their *fiṭrah* ("innate nature"), and what they learn at home and in society, what they learn at school, the knowledge they pick up casually here and there, the reality of their lives.

The above comments on *Al Qirā'ah* are equally applicable to other primers. From the very beginning education and teaching are a single entity that it is difficult to divide into unrelated compartments. Thus it would be no exaggeration to say that imparting Islamic knowledge has to begin from the earliest years. However, in the subsequent stages the educational influences are to a large extent separated from the process of acquiring knowledge as a purely intellectual activity.

In the final analysis and at the purely intellectual level, the word 'Allah' is the crucial factor in determining whether a student would in the future be an atheist, an agnostic, a half-believer or a true believer. The word 'Allah' can be a two-edged weapon: if it is eliminated from the learning process, it is likely to lead to the realm of *kufr*; on the other hand, if it is emphasized in the process it is conducive to lead to *imān*.

Each stage through which the student passes during his years at the educational institutions helps to form the final conceptual structure which processes the items of knowledge he acquires. This is why these educational institutions are of such great importance and why the Islamization of educational syllabi and material must not be restricted to any particular stage. I say this despite the fact that the college/university phase of the process is recognized to be of paramount importance, since it is these institutions that produce cadres with specialist training who are responsible for passing on knowledge to the coming generations—not only through the educational institutions, but also through all those other institutions which play an important part in people's social and cultural lives.

As we pointed in the introduction, the Islamization process at the college/university stage must take place at the theoretical and practical levels. The theoretical level can be satisfactorily covered in a single treatise of manageable size which can be used by students of the different departments as a basic manual explaining why the Islamization is a vital requirement at methodological, intellectual, creedal and human levels. At the same time, such a treatise can outline the practical procedures to be followed in each separate discipline so

that it can be shaped—or reshaped—within an Islamic framework.

It is also strongly recommended that a smaller, more simplified edition of such a book be made available for secondary school students, since the secondary school is generally the gateway to the university. The students at this level will thus be prepared intellectually and psychologically for the advance university manual and to make them receptive to the Islamization of knowledge in their future specialization.

It is also advisable that the writing of the simplified version of the book and its main edition should not be assigned to one single author, but to a group of authors with a range of expertise and specialized knowledge capable of covering all areas of science and scholarship. The resulting book would then be accurate, comprehensive and effective in communicating the required message. It would be appropriate if each of its chapters were assigned to one particular author, though in such a case all the authors of all the chapters should agree in advance on basic elements, principles and requirements, so that they could co-ordinate their work and select a particular methodology. It would also be acceptable if the task of writing such a book were assigned to a number of authors, each of whom would write the book in full. The results would then be compared and tested, and the one chosen would be the one that most satisfied the needs of the subject. Alternatively, the choice could be made on a chapter-by-chapter basis—the choice falling on the individual chapters nearest to meeting the criteria set for this project.

It is important that an 'introduction' like this must cover all the issues touched upon by this paper, starting with questions of terms and basics and including a historical review of the stages of unity and harmony—or conflict and separation—between knowledge and Islam; defining the basic stages of knowledge and their relationship to Islam; identifying the nature of the philosophical, methodological and factual relationship between the Qur'an and modern science; analyzing the fabric of traditional Islamic and modern material in order to pinpoint the areas that can assist in promoting the Islamization process. Finally, the books suggested must deal with the organized attempts that have taken place in recent decades and which have been referred to briefly in this study. What characteristics, then, does a book like this need in order to be able to fulfil its function with maximum effectiveness?

It would appear that the chief characteristic—or condition—is an ability to communicate its message. If it is able to transmit its contents to the students as clearly, methodically, scientifically and objectively as possible, it will have contributed to some progress towards our distant objective.

It is certain that the book will be able to communicate its message if its material is presented in a convincing logical progression, and if it is expressed concisely and is unencumbered by minor details. In addition, the use of appropriate comparisons and examples can further help instil its ideas in the students' minds.

However, communicating the message is not enough. A methodological book like this must have some intellectual or emotional impact on the student. It must be able to make him responsive to the demands of Islamization—not only so that he can further the cause of this project, but in order that he may respond positively and may become truly committed to it. Later, particularly if he continues his studies at a higher educational stage he may be able to make a valuable contribution to Islamization.

The desired impact is conditional upon the style. The language used should avoid resorting either to jargon—which causes boredom, antipathy and tiredness—or to prolixity which produces a flowery and profligate use of language at the expense of the actual content. Facts need to be communicated as directly as possible. Such factors also have an influence on communicative effectiveness. Dry presentation in a linguistically uncouth style is liable to suffer the same fate as a grandiloquent treatise in which the subject-matter is expressed in such a convoluted manner that it somehow manages to lose itself before reaching the brain. The ideal solution is compromise whereby maximum subject-matter is expressed in an elegant, clear, fluent style that could enable teachers to communicate it effectively to their students.

The second level at which Islamization will operate is a practical one which aims to shape—or reshape—each discipline separately according to the requirements of Islamization. Compared with the first level, this will naturally require a long period of time, a tremendous amount of hard work and a large number of researchers with specialized expertise, a wide cultural background and a proper Islamic vision. Such people should cover all scientific areas, be able to reconcile their specialized subjects with Islamization, and have a strong belief in their work.

To begin with we must draw the broad outlines (or basic plans) for the methodology of the Islamization of each discipline. These basic plans should be the work of one or more academics who possess the qualities we have indicated above.

Each plan can be submitted to the relevant teachers to assist them in teaching their subject. It can also be distributed to the students themselves, who will be able to use it as a practical guide in the study of their particular subjects from the Islamic point of view. A step like this will save valuable time, since it will be possible to implement as soon as the broad outlines of each discipline's methodology have been drawn up.

Since the Islamization of any discipline requires organized, joint efforts, the first criteria of such an undertaking consists in setting up a working committee composed of the specialists who are dealing with each aspect of its subject-matter. They should integrate their operations on the basis of a prior agreement between all of them on a work methodology, using all the instruments supported by the basic plans.

It is indeed worth noting here that post-graduate studies can contribute to the project by giving priority to the writing of specialized theses on subjects within the Islamic field. These could be either theoretical or applied, depending on the discipline concerned and the specialization of the students producing them.

We are living in the age of 'specialization explosion', if I may use the expression. Year after year the institutes and universities of the Muslim world produce large numbers of graduates. A few decades ago their annual increase was on an arithmetical progression—i.e. slow—and resulted in little net difference in quality or quantity. Today the rate is increasing on a geometric progression. It would be useful if some of this could be channelled towards the Islamization of knowledge.



## Notes

1. **Shari'ah:** The collective name for all the laws of Islam, including Islam's whole religious and liturgical, ethical and jurisprudential systems.
2. **Sunnah:** The path and example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), consisting of all that he said, did, approved of, or condemned.
3. **Fiqh:** Knowledge of Islam through its laws; science of the laws of Islam.
4. For further information on this see above. See also M.A.K. Lodhi (ed.), *Islamization of Attitudes and Practices in Science and Technology*, Islamization of Knowledge Series No. (9), IIIT and AMSE, 1409 AH/AC 1989.
5. **Imân** (as opposite to **Kufr**): The conviction, or certainty, that ALLAH is indeed the one and only God and that Muhammad is His last Prophet.
6. **Hadith:** pl. *ahādīth* The verbalized form of a tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad constitutive of his SUNNAH. The word Hadīth (when H is capitalized also applies to the sciences dealing with the Prophet's Tradition in all its aspects.
7. Those involved in Islamization might find it useful to begin by indexing all the research papers, and other works that have been produced according to subject-matter and date of submission or publication. They will find this difficult task easier if they use the bibliographies that some Muslim researchers have prepared and which list available material for various disciplines. Other useful sources include the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, *Al Muslim al Mū'asir* (both published by the IIIT) and *The Muslim World Book Review* (jointly published by the IIIT and The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, U.K.) as well as the Islamic Literature League's critical and creative works presented by its members and associates at its literary functions, seminars and meetings.



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'Imād al Dīn Khalīl was born in Mosul, Iraq, in 1939. He undertook primary and secondary education locally and obtained his B.A. in 1962 and his M.A. in 1965 in Islamic History from the University of Baghdad. He then started a doctoral research at the University of 'Ain Shams, Egypt, and in 1968 obtained a Ph.D. (with distinction) in Islamic History. He was also director of the University of Mosul Central Library (1966-1967) and was appointed in 1967 as lecturer at this University where he taught, until 1977, Islamic History, Research Methodology, and the Philosophy of History. Between 1977-1987 he served as Chairman of the Department of Antiquities, Director of the Cultural Museum Library, and Senior Research Fellow at the General Directorate of Museums and Antiquities. He is currently Professor of Islamic History at the University of Salahuddin, Arbil, Iraq.

Professor Khalīl has lectured at various Arab universities and institutions, and has made a contribution to the works produced by the Islamic, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). He has also participated in several international conferences, among them: The First International Conference on University Education (Baghdad, 1971); The Third International Conference on Sirah and Sunnah (Qatar, 1979).

He has published more than fifty books in Islamic thought, methodology and history as well as literature and literary criticism.

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